(b) Indian tea is being exported to Pakistan also. During 1994 shipment licences for export of 1.41 million kgs of tea to Pakistan have been issued by the Tea Board.

(c) Higher production of tea during the current year coupled with lower intake of Indian tea by major importing countries like Russia and Iran has resulted in prices of teas ruling easy at the auctions. In order to step up exports of India tea to Russia an agreement has been signed with the Russian Government which inter-alia provides for import of tea under the debt repayment mechanism. A suitable module has also been approved by the Government for promotional strategies to be undertaken in Russia and other CIS countries by the Tea Board in consultation with the tea industry. Iranian authorities have also been requested to facilitate opening of LCs for exports of Indian tea in respect of contracts signed by Indian exporters with the Iranian buying agency. Other steps taken to boost exports of tea through Tea Board's offices abroad inter-alia include (i) participation in trade fairs/exhibitaion (ii) media campaigns to increase consumer awareness and popularies Indian tea through the Tea Board marketing symbol (iii) support to various foreign brands containing Indian tea and (iv) Darjeeling and Assam Logo promotion schemes to popularies classic Indian teas.

Subsidised Rice to consumers in Andhra Pradesh

†188. SHRI N. GIRI PRASAD:
SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Andhra Pradesh has sought the Central assistance for implementation of the scheme to give rice at Rs.2/-per kg. to the ration card holders whose annual income is less than Rs. 6000--; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH):

(a) Yes, Sir,

(b) The Government of Andhra Pradesh has reported that they are providing up to 25 kgs of rice per month at the rate of Rs. 2 per kg. to every household identified as poor by the State Government. The State Government has estimated an expenditure of Rs. 1265/- crores in 1995-96 for this scheme. The State Government has requested the Central Government for a grant to cover this expenditure. Central Government makes available foodrains for the Public Distribution system to all States/UTs including Andhra Pradesh at uniform Central Issue Prices on which the Central Government incures subsidy. There is no proposal to give additional grants or subsidy to any State/UT for this purpose.

Dues Under ESI and PF acts

*189. SHRI: JIBON ROY:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any legal impediment under Section 22 of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 to recover legal dues under ESI & PF Acts from the defaulting industrial companies;

(b) if so, what action is being contemplated by Government to amend Section 22(6) of the SICA to avoid harassment to the workers who are being denied of their legal dues from defaulting employers;

(c) whether it is a fact that as on 31st March, 1994 the arrears of ESI

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Viren J. Shah

contributions only was about Rs. 40 crores from factories which were registered with BIFR; and

(d) if so, what action has been taken by Government to recover the arrears from the defaulting companies?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A SANGMA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no sub-section (6) under Section 22 of the SICA. As such the question of making any amendment in the sub-section does not arise.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Necessary legal and penal action is being taken to recover the arrears outstanding against the defaulting companies not registered with the BIFR.

Census of Beedi and Tobacco workers in Karnataka

*190. SHRI GUNDAPPA KORWAR: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted a census of beedi workers and tobacco workers in Karnataka;

(b) to what extent welfare measures have been effective for them;

(c) whether a safety net against unemployment is to be created for them in Karnataka; and

(d) the steps proposed to be undertaken to encourage adequate production environment for beedi and tobacco sector?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): (a) to (d) According to the information furnished by the State Government and the Welfare Commissioner, Bangalore, the number of beedi workers in the State of Karnataka is estimated at 3.55 lakhs. According to 1981 census, the number of beedi workers in the State of Karnataka was 2,53,898. Data based 1991 census concerning beedi workers is not yet available.

Lists of welfare schemes being implemented for beedi workers and the number of beneficiaries in the State of Karnataka during the last 3 years are attached as Statement-I&II (*See* below) Several steps have been taken to step up the tempo of welfare activities and to stream-line the working of the various welfare schemes for beedi workers. Highest priority is being given to schemes relating to housing, educational and health facilities for beedi workers. The quantum of financial assistance has been increased under different schemes and there is a substantial increase in the number of beneficiaries covered. The Tripartite Central Advisory Committee set up under the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976 which met on 14.3.95 have appreciated the good work being done in recent years for the welfare of beedi workers and made several recommendations for further improvement. The Regional Conference of State Labour Ministers of Southern Region held in Trivandrum on 4th October, 1994, of Eastern and North Eastern Region held at Bhubaneswar on 29th and 30th September, 1994 and Central and Northern Region held at Jaipur on 25th October, 1994, took important decisions concerning the revision of minimum wages for beedi workers and constitution of tripartite committee for standardisation of raw material etc. However, there is no proposal under consideration at present to create a safety net against unemployment for beedi workers in Karnataka as no serious or singificant threat of unemployment is envisaged now.

The Tobacco Board in the Ministry of Commerce are taking various steps to increase production of tobacco and export promotion of tobacco and tobacco products. According to the Ministry of Industry, all the benefits available to small scale industry are extended to beedi industry.